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LYRICS
OF
THE SOIL

BY

LEANDER LEGHORN

- Henry Mason Quadrangle -

1916

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no. 1.

— APOLOGY —

There are so many things near this my home
Deserving well the poet's fire and pen,
That this small volume would be filled again
Were I to write all thoughts that crowd my dome.
I hope that every vegetable friend
As well as those of sprightly song and wing,
Will not feel slighted that I do not sing
Of every one ere the last verse is penned.
I like them all,—the wholesome things of life
That seem so near and friendly,—air and trees,
The winning ways of water, when some breeze
Lures it from laziness to stormy and strife!
O, I could reel of rhythm full and fine
But.— Cease O Sonnet, here's the fourteenth
line.

Leander Leighorn.



© Soil

O Soil, sane substance fraught with life for all,
'Tis strange I n'er have thought to sing your song,
And put you in a poem where you belong —
Thou mother of the might of this our world!
I'll heed your silent call.

But for your everlasting love for work,
No seed could nestle in its warm earth nest;
No tree could rear aloft a leafy crest;
No fragile flower could venture into bloom;
There'd be no corn for pork!

Just think what we would have had we no soil!
Rock, sand and sea, sea, sand and rock galore!
We'd have to live on fish caught from the shore,
And live in houses built of iron and stone!
My brain aches like a boil.

But then we have thee, Soil, and ought to guard
Thy values as though gold were not more dear.
Therefore I praise thy products with a cheer,
And pray that thou wilt never weary be
Of feeding boor and bard.

Lon Voy

It's a right smart lot I could sing about soil,
But the plow-handle beckons this bard of toil.

HO, SPRING

I take my well-thumbed lyre upon my knee
And test the tone of each experienced string.
The trumps of March are echoing far and free,
But just the same I'll twang a bit for Spring.

Ho, rills and rivers, bulging to your banks
With molten snow and lots of liquid rain!
Thy voices swell their orchestrated thanks
Like some glad invalid just freed from pain.

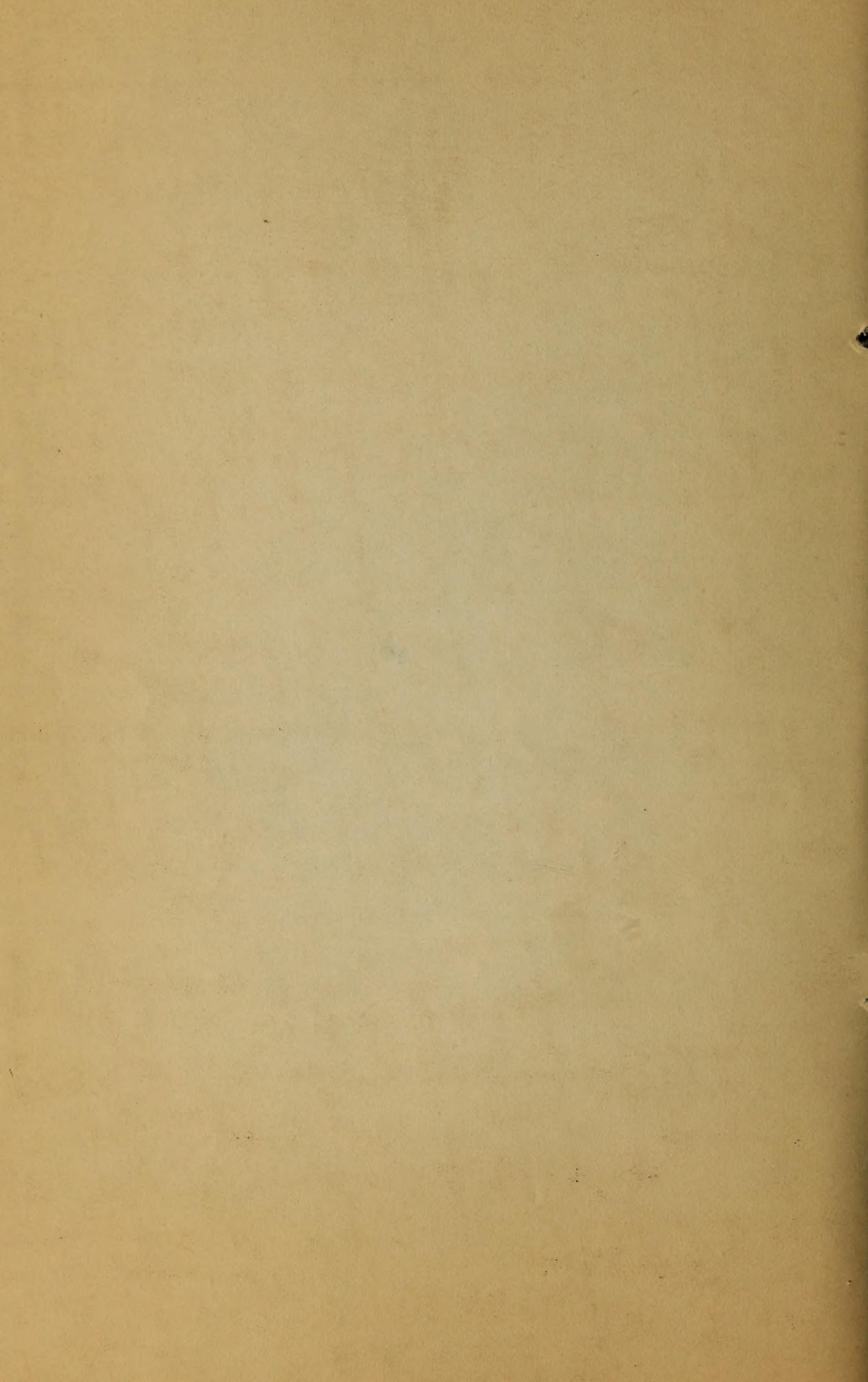
Ho, all you willows by the valley road,
I saw the new green on you yesterday!
Thy bloom was just the thing to lift a load
Of doubt that happened o'er my mind to stray.

Ho, all you saps that sank last fall to rest
Within the roots of every various tree!
Come forth and fill each waiting bud with zest,
For soon sweet Spring soft-fingered winds will free.

Ho, everything that sprouts with life anew,
I greet you all with heartfelt praise and song!
I'll have to soon get out to dig and do
My farming mite that helps the world along.

LON VOR

Cad says if I'm ever going to cure this cough,
I'd better not take my thick under-flannels off.



—HAIL GRASS—

I greet thee grass! Once more thy verdant spears
Spring from the sod as in all other years,
When snows have ceased to soak and freeze the soil,
And crows and farmers started out to toil.

O grass that saw blind Homer tread the plain,
And heard his famed pentameters' refrain —
Give thou to me some measure of his song,
With which to help my humdrum muse along.

I like to see thy first frail arrows rise
And point with hearty hope to yonder skies,
While all the yesterblades lie dun and low —
They soon will turn to mold to help you grow.

O grass, thou art the mainspring of the herds;
Thou art the milk, the butter, cheese and curds
That help to pay the taxes on our lands
That, otherwise, would be in other hands.

To RED ROBIN

Thou art the herald of my hopes, O bird,
For e'en before the upstart grass has stirred
To weave its carpet for our Dainty Dame,
I see thy crimson corset flaunt its flame.

Upon the ridgepole of my barn you stand.
Thy song careens o'er all the land at hand.
In one wild reckless carol of its own,
As though thy shoulders little care had known.

I like to watch you run about a rod,
Then stop and coax a worm from out the sod;
A worm made bashful by thy presence nigh,
Who knows to know thy gulp is but to die.

And so I say, "I love thee, buxom bird,
And may thy solos in the spring be heard
Until the world throws off its earthly load,
And frost and fusion cause it to explode."

Lon Vog

I've got to go out and hunt for the squeak
That's pestered my pump for more than
a week.

ON HEARING RAIN AT NIGHT

O rain, thou wondrous water-works of Time
That weaves a web of wet abaft the world,
I like to hear thee on the window chime
While I beneath a comforter am curled.

Then while the wind its rapid whips doth wield
And sends thee voiceful 'gainst the darkened pane,
I think of many a thankful tree and field,
And many a thirsty well and parched plain.

If thou wert dry instead of wet, O rain,
What wouldst thou send across the saddened
earth?

Methinks 'twould be a good big bunch of pain,
And healthy men would loose their prosperous girth.

So I will not indite a sad surmise,
But praise thy goodly gift as all should do,
And though the morn be wet when I arise,
I'll build the fire and sound my love for you.

Lon Voy

If you all are n't tired of an ancient rune
I'll send you a new spring poem pretty soon.

O MAY

On thee, O May, I bring my lyre to bear,
As Cupid starts a dart from his sure bow.
I'll greet thee early and proclaim my share
Of praise to ornate orchards, row on row.

Thou hast a head alive with bursting bloom;
The cherry and the pear trees crown thee
white

With scented snow-drifts that suggest no gloom,
But seem to say just this, "The world is right."

Now flock the myriad wingsters swooping high,
Or soaring low to hunt for homestead boughs,
Where they can bring their bags and baggage nigh,
And fear no dogs that bay nor cats with yows.

So gentle May keep coming, speed thy best.
Lay long thy strides o'er vale and sun-warmed hill.
And should some cynic mock thee in thy quest,
Spurn him as sodden spendthrift spurns a bill.

O may my rhymes so rock this vale of tears,
That all the world will know that May has come!
I'll toot my clarion harp until the years
Wing forth my fame as from a brazen drum!

Lon Vog

Cad says I'm to stop these poetic screeds
And get out in the back shed and sort those seeds.

RHUBARB

Thou Pie Plant, every spring I watch for thee,

And when I spy thy quaintly crinkled crest
Burst thru the crust of Nature's serious vest,

I know that Spring we'll see,
And all the sullen saps will be set free.

Though winds be wintry still, and rains beat cold,

I know the sun is leaping towards the north;

And though at noon I still enjoy hot broth

I sense the quickening mold

And watch each day thy crimson leaves unfold.

Some men profess contempt for thy staunch stalk;
But I say Rhubarb, that thy sauce and pies
Should bring the light of pleasure to all eyes,

Be each one queen or gawk

With appetite of wren or bold hen-hawk.

Tart tribute of the soil, thou dost not stint

Thy gift to man. May we all be like thee,

Not sour I mean, but generous and free.

Sir Newt, please take this hint,

And place this rhubarb rhapsody

In print.

Lion Way

I'll hang my harp behind the kitchen door,
And stir my slumps to start that plowing chore.



— O TENT CATERPILLAR —

O brazen bug, I tell you as a rule,
I foster in my heart all living things,
Whether they locomote by legs or wings,
Or act the part of solemn sage or fool.

But thou, O gobbler of the virgin leaf—
Thou art the grand exception to this law,
And, since you will persist to gorge and gnaw,
I'll do my best to make your life-span brief!

If poison, flaming torch, and creosote
Can so co-operate to spell thy doom,
Then thou wilt soon be shuddering in the tomb,
And buying tickets for old Charon's boat.

Perhaps I shouldn't fuss these beauteous days,
But when I see my budding trees defiled
It's most too much, and I get really riled.
Those bugs they get my goat, as daughter says.

Well folks, the next time that I write a poem
I'll try to show the silver in some cloud,
And not presume to bellow long and loud
When things are not exactly right at home.

Lon Voyn

Well, I must climb down from these peaks of thought,
And drown some pesky rats we've just caught.

O WINDOW FULL OF GREENS.

O window full of greens
I see thy shades and sheens,
Every morn,
As I awake from sleep
And the sun's long lances leap
Through the corn.

There's a valley, verdant, wide,
Where the ripening grasses bide,
That I hail.

O'er each swaying, blossomed blade,
Dew her diamond-drops hath sprayed
Like a veil.

There are aged, arching elms,
Reaching to the air's high realms,

I would praise,
Giving travelers of the road
Tortured by the sun's hot goad
Shady ways.

Distant mountains' rugged lines
Jagged with the spires of pines,
Spruce and fir,
Tell me of my littleness,
While vague thoughts of blessedness
In me stir.

Good green world I'm glad to be
Laboring contentedly
'Mid thy scenes.

May I never cease to see
Beauty and simplicity
In thy greens.

TO MY CRITICS

Little care I how flippan' bards may bleat,
And call rude names against my honest song;
Or with crude art acrostic try to wrong
Me and my lyre, and scare us off our feet!

"My plow-born Pegasus is here to stay!"
I answer to my critics, one and all.
"If you don't like my reed's rude, rural call,
Then don't you read it, - I'm not in your pay!"

There now, that's all - I've said my meanest word -
The north-west wind is like an eagle bold,
This sapphire day and I'll not be a scold.
And if I cannot sing like yonder bird
I'll be a hen and cluck with calm content
And not give gloom to our fair

con-
ti-
nent.

OLD NICK OF NIGHT

Thou art Old Nick of Night, O Crow, I ween
Full many a time and oft I've conned thy sheer
In my cornfield where sprouts were just a-peep
Above the mold where erstwhile seeds did sleep.

O Ancient Mariner of airy seas,
I've watched thee flap thy frame high o'er the seas,
As I did tilt the cider-jug some day
To intersperse my labors mid the hay.

Some great birdologist has said that thou
Canst live five times as long as any cow;
In fact when not laid low by guns of man,
Thy years do more than equal his own span.

I like to watch thee waft on war-worn wing
Across the new blue of the sproouting spring;
I like to hear thy clarion call so loud,
That bids a bold defiance to man's whole crowd.

And so, O Crow, I grudge thee not thy fare
That thou dost filch from mine and others' farms.
Believing that we creatures all should share
The equal earth, free from all strife's alarms.

THY LURE, O LUNA

O Moon, sweet tender bride of Sol, the sun,
Who doth reflect his strenuous ray by night,
I take my quill to quell the seething flight
Of this my muse whose task seems never done.

O solemn, silver circle swinging free,
Chained to the world with silent threads of what?
I gaze upon thee till my soul is shut
To other sights and sounds that compass me.

There is a mystic message in thy shine
That lures young men and maids to stroll and spoon.
'Tis something different from the light of noon;
It has a sort of sout-tone that is fine.

O rapt revolver with the pale, cold front
Whose craters stare like eyes of dogs long dead —
Long may thy ghostly glimmering be spread
Across the world in wide, romantic stunt.

Lure on, O Luna, lift our minds from clay;
Teach us to keep our faces towards the light,
That we may help along the reign of right
And heed not fiends that pull the other way.

—O HEN—

O famous fowl, I should have harped on thee
Ere my old head had wholly grizzled grown,
But thou like articles we daily see,
Seemed most as common as the sod and stone.
However, Hen, my lyre is on my lap,
And I will launch a song to weld thy name
Unto those deathless crags where eagles flap
And preen their wings beneath the glance of fame.
What could we use, I ask, when folks are sick
Were it not for thy silent yield of eggs?
What makes the invalid his chops to lick
And stands him up on renovated legs?
I answer "Chicken Broth!" - 'tis just the juice
To stir ambition in a weakened frame.
And what makes hearty men their belts to loose?
Ah! - Chicken Pie! What magic in thy name!

I tell you Hen, I'd rather be like thee,
And churn up corn and bugs that eggs may grow,
And sprout good wings for future fricassee,
And groom myself for next fall's poultry show -
Than be a Kaiser with a lust for harm,
Or pirate hawk with talons and strong wing -
I'd rather be "Leander" on the farm;
There I can work, - there I can sometimes sing.

O MONOPLANE

O human fool whose wings of cloth and spruce
Bear you aloft up there with speed so swift—
Methinks that you can even beat the deuce
And other birds that soar and sink and drift.

With hurried humming like a demon bug,
Thou dost announce thy presence on the trail;
Thou dost with graceful ease thy pilot lug,
Though woeful winds rebuff the rudder-tail.

When with warped wings you swing the circle's course,
Or draw your speedy spirals on the air,
Or swoop and dip as swift as fabled horse,
That skims the unseen azure meadows fair—

'Tis then I tremble lest some brace or wire
That makes the inwards of your frame intact
Should start and snap while you were climbing higher
Only to crash to earth with sad impact.

So Monoplane, I say, take healthy heed,
And do not bust your bones of brass and wood,
For Science needs must woo the careful deed,
If she's to conquer air as well as flood.

O SUMMER

O summer to thy glorious and thy best
Of green and flowering vales I give thee hail!
Now is the winter of my great unrest,
For I can scarce contain my inmost wail.

Why am I festering 'neath this load of song
That haunts me with a heavy-handed heel,
To press me on my tortuous way along
Albeit though their presence I do feel?

Thine ecstasies mean little now for me
For pasture, barn and garden claim my time;
The pigs are prying boards from off their pen,
And I must fetch the peas and beans to prime.

And yet I fain would praise thee, summer sweet,
For thou dost preach of cheerfulness and hope;
And with thy sun full-flushing my bronze cheek,
I will not chide thee, though with weeds I cope.

And so I say, "All hail the summer's tide,
That swells o'er this, the shore of man's short span,
And gives him gracious bounties to abide
Through storm and strain of winter's serious plan."

Lion Voy

I've got to go out and hunt for a skunk
That steals my chicks when the sun has sunk.

THE MOSQUITO

O buzzing beast launched by Beelzebub
Against this sorrowing world where joy is lone,
Well might we spare thine evening monotone,
And cheat thee from thine unearned human grub.

Are not our farmers' lives eclipsed and veiled
And bowed beneath the grinding heels of bugs?
O how I'd like to see thy scalp well nailed
In some strong jail along with other thugs!

Still must I save my wind and also ink,
And strive to be broad-minded like my fields,
Keeping serene, that I may clearly think
Dispassionately on what this earth yields.

For really now there's lots of good things here,
If we but shed our dowdy duds of doubt,
And rove a generous-minded eye about,
And not keep thinking things are soiled and sere.

And so I say the world is mainly good.
Through many trying cons it has stood,
And if some little rifts attend my luse
I'll try not let them spoil its native toot.

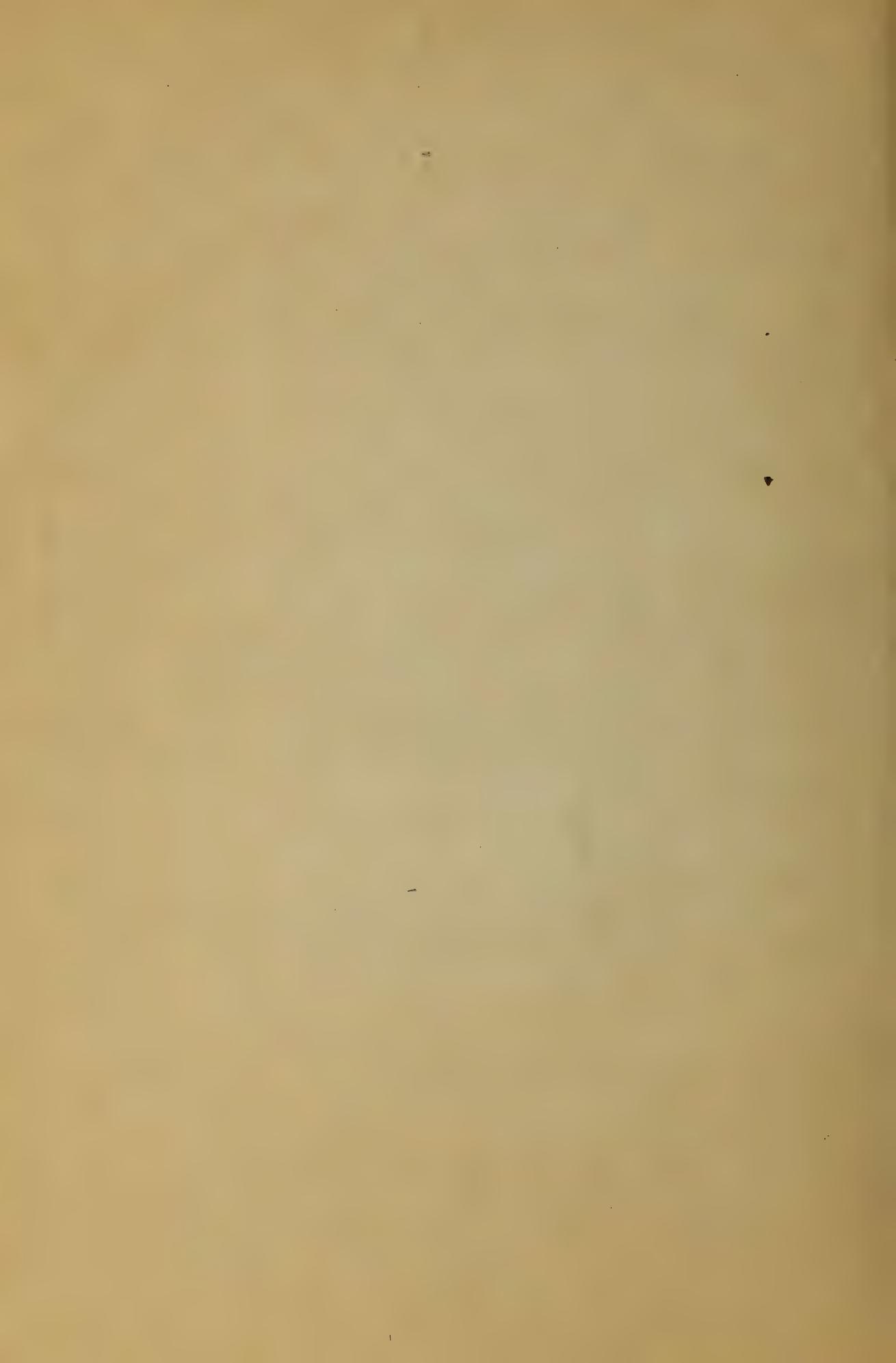
O COMET

— A sonnet —

O comet, with your fire-infested tail,
I see thee gleaming from my kitchen door
As I fare forth to do the evening chore,
And amble barnwards with the milking pail.

What is the mission of thy misty light
That clings, a streaming veil, to thy great head,
Whose fire just like a bursting crown is spread
In radiance rare, that aids thy serious flight?

Where didst thou come from, whither goest thou?
They say thy path is one great monstrous curve,
From which thou canst not even one hair's breadth
swerve,
Else wouldst thou come to smash as in a slough.
O may I wing my humble path aright,
As thou dost, Cosmic Comet, in thy flight.



O VARIOUS BEANS

O Bean, thou bulbous bivalve of the soil,
I love to watch thy hearty heads aspire
From the dank dirt, and, ever climbing higher,
Respond to air, sun, rain, and honest soil.

Whether we pick thee young and boil thee green,
Or shell thee from the pods in August days,
Or thresh thee out when Autumn lends her haze
To dim the summer's sight, I tell thee, Bean —

Most worthy art thou of my simple lay.
Yea, worthy of a greater pen than mine!
In Fame's long hall I'll place thee with the kine,
Whose value I have voiced for many a day.

So from whatever angle thou art seen,
Thy worthiness shines out to bless mankind.
And for my part I like thee with a rind
Of pork, baked in a pot, — pork somewhat lean.

Yes, Bean, I'd like to grow to be like thee —
To know and love the air and grip the ground —
To ably stand all tests life may propound,
And from the nearest duty never flee.

Lon Voay.

Well, I'll have to fly forth from this poetry fog,
And build a new V-trough for old Pharaoh our hog.

ANOTHER SONNET TO ANOTHER COMET.

Thou silent swooper of majestic swing
That condescends to cross our mundane sky,
And puts to shame the smaller heavenly fry
Like some carouser who must have his fling —
My praise to thee, bold brother, now shall ring
Its clarion note, and o'er New England fly.
Three-hundred-thousand pairs of eyes shall spy
These teeming lines and heed their trumpeting.

Thy giant path elliptic is so long
No human yard-stick can begin to tell
How many feet and inches in it dwell,
Nor can we tell what makes thy glow so strong!
Unlike some human sloths who'll read this
rhyme,
You get your punctual bulk around on time.

O NIGHT

O Night thou art out there, O Night supreme
King of a silent solitude that wears
A sable cloak of cloud without a seam —
The kind of night when robbers leave their lairs.
Thy black beatitude is good for us,
Who through the long days labor for our beans,
For roof and raiment, and who sometimes cuss,
Because we cannot roost upon our jeans.

O Night when thou art stuck plum full of stars,
As thick as raisins in Cad's home-made cake,
'Tis then my spirit leaps its pasture bars
And doth a journey with the muses take.

The rhymes come rushing through my grizzled head,
Like lambkins tumbling round at thought of spring.
I see a goodly feast of thoughts widespread,
And weave my songs from almost anything.

But when you woo the moon O winsome Night,
The stars play hide-and-seek within her veil;
They modestly refrain from looking bright,
For fear they may disturb the lovers' tale.

So, Night, good-night, I'll seek my pallet's husks,
The fire is low, the clock is striking eight;
Cad says I'll be a dope tomorrow, sure.
I always am when I sit up so late.

SONG ABOUT AUTUMN

O pleasant days when I look off and see
The fireless flames and leaf-born coals alight
Upon the mountains just across the lea, —
I then get sober though the day be bright.

I'm not exactly sad, as one might say,
But only pensire like a low-turned lamp,
Or like a hen that just sits down to lay,
Or like a katydid, that's cold and damp.

Though I am slightly sad, yet will I praise
The handsome harvest that the year has sent;
I'll also sing the placid, purple haze
That shrouds the hills like some transparent tent.

I love to watch the flocks of hurrying leaves
Do their gymnastics through the sun and air,
The while some bold and Boreas-minded breeze
Rips off a hoot that tells of winter's lair.

I've worked real hard this summer and this fall,
Preparing for old winter's sullen tale
That he will shout through chimney, tree and wall,
Accompanied by voiceful sleet and hail.

Lon Voy

Cad says I can help banish winter's gloom,
By setting up that air-tight stove pretty soon.

O BARN

O Barn, thou great commodious house for hay,
Methinks thou dost deserve a poet's lay!
So while my feet are drying by the fire,
I'll force a chant to thee from out my lyre.

Where would we farmers be? I ask of all,
If thou didst not maintain from spring to fall,
And yet maintain again from fall to spring,
Thy silent service that doth comfort bring.

Thou dost keep dry the tons of hay and grain,
From winter's wild salutes of snow and rain;
Thou dost provide a boudoir safe and warm,
That keeps the cows and horses from all harm.

Thy silent service as I said before
Is better far than if you used the roar
That some men shed upon our weary race,
When candidates for office set the pace.

Lon Voy

My feet are all dry so I'll stir my jeans,
And get out in said barn and
thresh ·

my
beans.

O Cow

O cow, to thee apologies I bring
For never having sung thy praise before.
My heart is humbled, therefore now I fling
A wreath of tuneful tribute at thy door.

Thou art indeed the king of all the brutes
That make the farm a paying thing to wield.
Thy milk and cream and butter are the fruits
Of patient foraging in verdant field.

The city man sits down each morn to munch
His patent predigested dish of food;
In vain would he these toothsome granules crunch,
Had he no cream to ease their edges rude.

When thou art old and cuds are hard to chew,
With reverent hand we turn thee into beef.
We make thy hide our boots, thy hoofs our glue;
Thy bones mixed with the soil renew the leaf.

Long may we hear thy mild, mellifluous "moo!"
At milking time, when evening draweth near;
Long may the grasses feast on sun and dew,
That thou mayst never know a pasture dear.

Lion Way

Well, I'll have to stop spinning a borine yarn,
And set those new cow-stanchions up in the barn.

SONNET TO GAO'S TEAKETTLE

Thou soloist of home whose buxom form
Resembles some stout operatic star,
What carest thou though plaudits never jar
The stove, thy stage, that keeps thy seat so warm?

Thy song, e'en though 'tis humble, is a lay
That speaks of peace and plenty and is fraught
With all those notes that are in households taught,
Where wives and daughters cook and sanely stay.

I love the festooned steam that comes from thee—
I love thy crooning when in thoughtful mood;
Thou art the bulwark of the cup of tea
That I partake each day with hearty food.
And since thou canst not grace the Hall of Fame
This poet will thy worthiness proclaim.



O turnip, lusty sphere whose ample parts
Grow mellow in the ground when frosts career
Across our fields, and make us use our arts
To keep us warm when fields have hushed their green!

I'll place thee in a poem, thy fame shall be
Proclaimed across New Englands hearty hills,
Till all the people shall thy merit see,
And use thee freely to reduce their bills.

For people, hogs, and cattle thou dost yield
A solid sustenance that stems the stream
Of hunger, when, well washed and sliced and peeled,
Cad boils thee plain, or serves thee up in cream.

Sometimes in autumn when the day is bright,
I like to pull a good white turnip up
And munch it while I meditate a mite
On rural rhymes, or play with Bing, the pup.

So turnip, rustic root, heed not men's jeers.
I grant thee this, an aureole of art,
To grace thy brow and pay thee for the years
That thou hast lived and played thine honest part.

Lion Voy.

Now that these leares of my thought are shed,
I'll fit that new king-pin into my wood-sled.

O RAIN IN GENERAL

O rain in general, friend of all mankind,
Methinks my harp should hasten to free its mind
Of stored reflections on thy sterling ways,
Ere the great past absorbs the present days.

When spring draws nigh to woo the quickening saps,
And tempts us to take off our winter wraps,
'Tis then thy showers from lowly clouds on high
Fall down to help the roots their trades to ply.

When summer comes and Sol's hot heel has hurled
Long waves of heat to torture this our world,
'Tis sweet to hear the thunder's prominent knell
That shakes from heaven the streams that soak us well.

I tell you, rain, we'd have an awful time
If on our roofs you ceased your soothing chime;
And if we could not sense thy rapiers sharp,
The world would lose a song from this my harp.

SONNET TO A BOILED DISH

O thou thick end of corned beef, steaming hot,
Reposing on thy platter with huge grace —
Methinks thou dost deserve an honored place
Within the gates of Fame's fair garden-plot.

How like a sun thou art, for round thy form
Are satellites of carrots, parsnips, beets,
Potatoes, turnips, cabbage, — ah, what feats
For gastronomic gymnasts to perform!

When winds are coming keen and snow flakes fly,
And labor out of doors is done with zest,
Until the vacuum beneath my rest
Cries out in anguish for a food supply —
O what were all the scents of Arabia,
To thy grand, jaw-inviting, symphony!

O STUBBLE

O stubble where my scythe hath seared
The stalwart stalks of erstwhile corn,
The mute mounds where my hoe hath wrought
Cause me to pause this autumn morn.

In fancy now I view the ranks
Of tall, green grenadiers that stood,
In sturdy unison to swing
Their swords against the wind's wild mood.

O stubble, on their shoulders grew
The lusty ears that listened well
To all the murmured mysteries
That earth and air and rain could tell.

How I did like to lie awake
A short time summer nights, to hear
The breezes running down the rows
Telling of harvest labor near.

And then the little winds would call
A last halloo and take their flight;
Then every grenadier would sheathe
His sword within the silent night.

Lon Voy

Well, I must stop singing this song of the sod,
And take Martha up to Bill Fords to get shod.

O ORBS

O Orbs that circulate in pathways curved
Swung by the master vortex of the void —
Those lines did sound so wise I sort of swerved
From my plain path of thought, not often cloyed.

I say, O Orbs, that thine unbiased fame
Has been to men an inspiration grand.
They've seen the matchless marshalled lights the same
Since Adam round Eve's waist did put his hand.

Arcturus is my favorite in the spring;
Fair Vega's silver gilds the summer night;
Capella flies on autumns cooling wing,
And Sirius dares to war with winter's might.

I often speculate within my mind
Upon the whirling ones that give no light;
Those stars whose forms no telescope can find,
E'en though they look hard on the darkest night.

You Orbs, I hope your phalanxes will flash
As long as I upon this ball do pant;
And when my songs have turned to dust and ash,
Keep up your glorious, silent, evening chant.

Lon Voig

Where did I get my starry clack?
I got most of it out of the almanack.

O HOG

O Hog, whose apt aromas strike my nose
When thou art roasting in the oven's embrace,
Why is it, tell me, that you never pose
Within those halcyon dells where poets propose
To place all things of grace?

What should we do for bacon, hams, and lard?
I ask of all who read these lines today,
Did we not raise thee and humanely guard
Thine earthly footsteps, lest thy life be hard
And dry as sunburned clay?

O rotund rioter amid the food
That makes of life one long-drawn, monster meal!—
O fat philosopher of dreamy mood,
Whose forbears rampaged thru some Saxon wood,
Thy nobleness I feel.

If thou were thin instead of thick, O Hog,
No large, white, slabs of salt pork would be ours.
Our days would drag as heavy as a log
That falls and soaks in some forgotten bog,
Far from the haunts of flowers.

Lon Voy

Well, I must stop soaring on wings of ink,
And mend the wood drain that leads

down from the sink.

BARE BOUGHS ABOUND

(A February Thought.)

The great elm growing by the driveway gate
Has shaken off its canopy of leaves.
They have been hurled as if by some huge hate
O'er half the county at a rapid rate
Till thou, O Bougħs, art bare,
And from my kitchen chair
I watch while twilight her soft shadow weares.
O tree thou art like some enormous harp,
Hung on the sky's blue wall by giant bard
And though the winds blow through thee rude and sharp
I cannot find it in my soul to carp,
For thou dost sing to me
O virile, voiceful tree
And bid me not consider my lot hard.
In general all the months I fain would praise,
But if there's one that I love least of all,
I think it's February, for his days
Bring Boreas with his fierce, frozen ways,
'Till Zero, with his chills,
Augments the doctor's bills,
Unless we plod where Hygiene throws her thrall.
But, February, though thou dost abound
Amid our leaflees world, I sometimes sense
A sort of inner light, when I look round
And see the days grow longer. I have found
That since I've trod this world,
Within thy frosts are furled
The fair, frail buds that drive thy cohorts hence.



O ZERO

O Zero, scion of the berg-bound north,
Thou apt congealer of the fluid world,—
Before my blazing hearth my muse bursts forth,
To chant a tribute ere the flames are furled.

When snows have smothered all the hills in white,
When winds have piled the drifts across the vale,
And howled like saddened sirens thru the night,
Or rattled shutters like a crazy flail —

After all this you come hot-foot in wrath
And drive the clouds a hundred leagues away.
The stars are snapping bright and on her path
The moon, unharmed, heeds not thy virile sway.

I don my mitts and woolen tippet warm,
And pull my woodchuck cap down round my ears;
I shovel sundry paths around the farm,
And then help break the roads with log and steers.

Friend Zero, I approve thy programme cold,
For, if thou didst not grant this icy dower,
What, I repeat, when July takes a hold,
Would keep our milk and cream from getting sour.

—O CUP OF TEA.—

O tea, thou essence from the Orient, drawn
Across the leagues of sea in ships of steel,
Then brought to our own town in air-tight tins
That hold thy famous fumes in secret seal —

Though other poets of greater girth than I
Have placed thee on a mountain-top of fame,
And crowned thee with a laurel wreath of steam,
Still will I urge my muse to praise thy name.

What, may I ask of all who read my lay,
Is better than a good hot cup of tea,
When taken with a supper of cold lamb,
Potatoes, fried, and stewed canned corn? Ah, me!

The rise to comfort's summit when squash pie,
And home-made sour milk cheeses, and preserve,
All fit for kings' dessert, are brought along.
Then Ead with smiles my second cup doth serve.

Yes, tea, thou dost set free within my soul
A silent song of comfort which doth bless
The tired body and the busy brain
With some intangible, divine caress.

YEAST OF THE YEARS —

O Joy, thou art the yeast of all my years,
That lifts the heavy dough-like gloom of thought,
Am I perchance in trouble's treadmill caught,
And life seems naught but fallowness and fears!

Thou art the ginger that doth make me gee,
When work seems only but a sullen wall
In climbing which my shins would pant and fall,
And e'en my smile would lose its glint and flee.

But Joy is king and reigneth over us,
And we can see his shining sceptre still,
If we but look athwart yon shouldering hill,
Where grasses wave and do not make a fuss.
O then I feel a harmony abide,
That swells up in my inwards like a tide!

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